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20 Tips for Overcoming the Fear of Public Speaking—Speaking in public is a source of anxiety for most people. This article, part of the Communications Tips & Techniques Series, provides some ideas for minimizing concerns and maximizing effectiveness when it's your turn to give a speech.

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Communications Tips & Techniques Series

20 Tips for Overcoming Fear of Public Speaking

1. Nearly everyone is nervous about public speaking—you're not alone in your fear. Effort and practice will help you overcome your fear.
2. Public speaking is a skill to develop—not an inherent talent.
3. Your audience wants you to succeed; they are almost always on your side.
4. Be glad that you care enough about succeeding that you're nervous. It can be a good sign.
5. Think of public speaking as an opportunity-not a chore.
6. It isn't a speech. It's an opportunity to share information you have with those who have an interest in hearing it.
7. Believe in yourself, but not so much that you try to wing it without adequate preparation.
8. Envision success—act the part. Think about what success would look like and then go for it.
9. Assume you will do all right, and you probably will. Assume you will fail, and you probably will.
10. Know your subject well, and thoroughly prepare yourself to talk about it.
11. Control nervous responses:
 - Quaking hands—use them constructively with natural gestures and props.
 - Quaking voice—take a deep breath or a sip of water.
1. Channel your nervousness into enthusiasm; if your nervousness is apparent, joke about it to ease the tension.
2. Rehearse and time your speech (with a friend, tape recorder, and/or mirror).
3. Dress at least as well as you think your audience will—or maybe a step better. Looking more casual than your audience will work against your self-confidence and detract from your credibility.
4. Have a written outline handy in case your mind goes blank.
5. Fake eye contact if you must (look at hairlines or mouths instead).
6. Have a glass of water handy. You can't talk well when your mouth is dry, and your audience will notice.

7. Don't sweat small mistakes—everyone makes them, even experienced broadcasters.
8. Afterwards, ask selected listeners for sincere feedback. People don't usually like to force it on you, but they like to be asked. Then attempt to incorporate this feedback into your next speech.
9. Seek out and accept every opportunity to speak before an audience. It does get easier over time—and for many, even enjoyable.

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